

PEOPLE & THINGS

THIS has perhaps been the worst month in the history of the motor car. At the beginning of it Ascari, the only man to have been motor-racing world champion two years in succession, was killed at Monza (his father, the Italian champion of the day, was killed at Montlhéry just thirty years before). A week later Bill Vukovich was killed trying to win the Indianapolis "500" for the third year running.

Ten days ago, on the way to Le Mans to deliver a new D-type Jaguar in time for the race, Michael Lyons, the son of the famous chairman of the Jaguar Car Company, was tragically killed in a road accident, and the fatal month ended with one motor car killing eighty-two people.

Specious Talk

DEATH is as inseparable from motor-racing as it is from all other fast and violent sports, but today I find fewer enthusiasts trying to justify motor-racing as anything more than a dangerous sport.

In the old days there is no doubt that the "breed" of cars was constantly being improved through such gruelling races as Le Mans, though many consider the six-day International Alpine Trials more important to the manufacturer and the owner-driver.

But today the speed of cars has outstripped the design of roads and of many race tracks and has almost outstripped the nerve and mental reactions of the drivers.

The cars bear little relation to the models the public buys (the life of the disc brakes used at Le Mans is little more than the twenty-four hours of the race), and to suggest that the owner-driver's interests have in any way been served by the toll of this black month is specious nonsense.

At the "Quai"

THE appointment of Monsieur Roland de Margerie to the key post of Director-General of Political and Economic Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay is the most important change in the French Foreign Ministry since Monsieur Massigli left London to take over its direction.

Monsieur de Margerie is an old and tried friend of this country. Those who knew him when he was in London for six years as Counsellor of M. Corbin's Embassy, and have managed to intercept him more recently during his flying visits to Lancaster House, will remember him for his brilliant analytical mind and prodigiously well-informed, incisive and allusive conversation.

Diplomacy has been the de Margerites' business for three generations. His father, Pierre de Margerie, was Doyen des Ambassadeurs de France, his younger son Emmanuel is now M. Chauvel's Second Secretary in London, and his cousin Chrétien is Political Counsellor in Berlin.

Huile de Minuit

MONSEUR MASSIGLI'S partiality for English manners and habits is, of course, famous in Paris, and it is even said that he has been known to catch his breath at the sight of a buttoned sofa or a club armchair.

Recently—fired, no doubt, by the example of the Foreign Office and

By ATTICUS

its system of Resident Clerks—he has given instructions that unmarried members of the Ministry shall take it in turns to sleep in the building and deal with any emergency that may arise.

Every night, therefore, at "the hour between dog and wolf," a martyr to Angliomania may be seen to creep along the Quai d'Orsay, spongebag in hand, in readiness for his moonlit vigil, only counting himself fortunate that kippers and tea for breakfast are not yet a part of his lot.

The President's Slam

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER'S bridge is considerably better than his golf, at which he has a handicap of eleven, and such experts as Culbertson and Jacoby place him just below professional standards.

He has always played a great deal, since the days when bridge was a necessary accomplishment in American Army society.

He plays no conventions except Blackwood, and has a weakness for trumps as an opening lead. His

♠ 7 4	♥ J 10 6 5 3	♦ A 6	♣ Q J 8 5
♠ 8 2	♥ K Q 4	♦ J 5 4	♣ A K 10 7 6
<div style="display: flex; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin: 0 10px;"> N W E S </div> </div>			
♠ A K Q 6 3	♥ none	♦ K Q 10 9 8 7 3 2	♣ none
Neither side vulnerable. South dealt. The bidding:			
S. Eisenhower	W. Gruenther	N. Clark	E. Moses
6D	4Bble	7D	4Bble
Pass	Pass	Redble	Pass

favourite hand, the redoubled Grand Slam in Diamonds, portrayed above, happened in a game played with Generals Gruenther, Clark and Moses just before the end of the war.

General Eisenhower kept his head and played three rounds of Spades, trumping the third in dummy, before clearing trumps.

King of the Congo

TOO little has been made in this country of King Baudouin's great personal success in the course of his first visit to the Belgian Congo.

That this shyest and most unassuming of monarchs should succeed in his complicated mission was a matter for hopeful speculation; but from the moment, some months ago, when the King personally remodelled the programme devised for him by his Ministers, there was no doubt of his enthusiasm for the tour.

Any colonial visit, however carefully planned, has hazards which only readiness of wit can negotiate, and there were moments when a prompt hand with a trowel, and an improvised taste for raw carrots were more useful than the most elaborate documentation.

It was at such times that the young King knew how to endear himself to his African subjects, and it was as King of the Congo, as much as of the Belgians, that he returned last week to Brussels.

Stravinsky's Tribute

WHEN Dylan Thomas died in New York, he was on his way to Hollywood to see Stravinsky

about plans for a new opera for which Thomas was writing the libretto. After the poet's death, Stravinsky, as a tribute, set to music the poem "Do not go gentle into that good night," which Thomas had written to the memory of his father.

The work—"In Memoriam Dylan Thomas—Dirge-Canons and Song"—was heard in Los Angeles in September last year, and the first public performance in this country is to be given by the London Bach Group at eight o'clock next Wednesday at St. James's Church, Piccadilly.

This youthful group of musicians was formed in 1950 by former London School of Economics students. Besides recitals of Bach church cantatas and motets, they have included several first London performances of work by modern composers in their programmes.

Maria Comes of Age

THIS season's debutante dances, splendid though many of them are, have been put sharply in their place by the coming-out ball given last Sunday night in Spain to an eighteen-year-old debutante named Maria Gloria March.

Maria Gloria is the granddaughter of Juan March, who is certainly among the richest men in the world, and quite possibly the wisest and happiest of that select but generally unenviable band. He is a great friend of this country.

The party took place on the March estate in Majorca and the sixty kilometres of highway from Palma were floodlit at his expense. More than a thousand guests from the mainland were transported to Majorca in private planes and there were 1,200 guests for a dinner party at which 800 chickens, 500 kilos of fish, 300 lobsters and 1,000 pounds of strawberries were consumed. To mark the occasion, Senora March gave a million pesetas (£10,000) to the poor people of Palma.

After all this, it is pleasant to record that the greatest Spanish party of all time was given for a girl who is not only very beautiful and unspoilt but is also the darling of the Majorcan people.

Late Night (Final)

THERE is something about newspaper life which evades even the most practised of playwrights (let alone novelists and painters) and I hear that in his new four-hour play "Nekrasoff," M. Jean-Paul Sartre has joined the list of those who have tried, and failed, to render its particular savour.

Rehearsals at the Theatre Antoine had not, I understand, been free from acrimony. One actress is reported to have resigned from the cast after the author had accused her of being "too Cartesian"; and there is a rare unanimity in the cries of "Thumbs down!" which reach me from first-night survivors.

It seems a pity; for there is matter for Shaw, or at least for Bridie, in the central idea—that of the unscrupulous editor who tries to palm off a nameless vagrant as a fugitive Soviet Minister. But not, apparently, for M. Sartre.

B.I.S. Takes You There

MR. EGIN MEKIE, who besides being head of Silver City Airways is chairman of a number of insurance interests, tells me that a lady who has booked a berth with the British Interplanetary Society for the first tourist flight to the moon approached one of his companies for insurance cover.

She was quoted normal rates for flying, plus fifty per cent., but with the cautious rider: "Non return in no proof of death."